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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this research is to determine the level of career satisfaction of elementary teachers who have been teaching for 15 or more years and to identify the forces that have kept them in the classroom and the teaching profession. Both quantitative and qualitative data collected in school districts in northern California and eastern Pennsylvania inform this study. The data suggest that many factors motivate teachers to remain in the classroom. The findings are grouped according to three broad areas: professional satisfaction, practical motivators, and social factors. Teachers also express some concerns about the profession and choosing it again. The concerns stem from increased demands, inadequate preparation and support, and low monetary compensation. Overall, this study has important implications for the profession and proposes recommendations for change to better support teachers and their students. The survey is appended. (Contains 17 references.) (Author/SM)

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# THE VOICES OF EXPERIENCED ELEMENTARY SCHOOL TEACHERS: THEIR INSIGHTS ABOUT THE PROFESSION

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## ABSTRACT

The Voices of Experienced Elementary Teachers:

Their Insights About The Profession

Susan H. Marston, Ed.D Victoria B. Courtney, Ed.D.

The purpose of this research is to determine the level of career satisfaction of elementary teachers who have been teaching for 15 or more years and to identify the forces that have kept them in the classroom and the teaching profession. Both quantitative and qualitative data collected in school districts in northern California and eastern Pennsylvania inform this study. The data suggests many factors that motivate teachers to remain in the classroom. The findings are grouped according to three broad areas: Professional Satisfaction, Practical Motivators, and Social Factors. Teachers also express some concerns about the profession and choosing it again. The concerns stem from increased demands, inadequate preparation and support, and low monetary compensation. Overall, this study has important implications for the profession and proposes recommendations for change to better support teachers and their students.


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## Introduction

Public school teachers have had to contend with challenging work conditions such as a highly diverse student population, deteriorating facilities, inadequate equipment and supplies, large class size, lack of respect, changing expectations of administration and parents, and low salaries. With all of these, one wonders why some teachers have continued in the profession and what can be learned from them.

The purpose of the present study was to determine the level of career satisfaction of elementary teachers who have been teaching for 15 or more years and to identify the forces that have kept them in the classroom and the teaching profession. Such information should be useful in enhancing pre-service education of beginning teachers and the in-service education of experienced teachers.

## Related Research

### *Life History*

This study originated from the research of Michael Huberman (1993) who used life history studies to examine the lives of teachers in the context of their own experiences and values. Huberman explored the life cycle of teachers in relationship to Maslow's hierarchy and adult stages of development. He believed that by more clearly defining the different stages of development for teachers, it would be possible to increase self-awareness and affect their life decisions constructively. Other researchers who have preceded and continued Huberman's work include Goodson (1992), Knowles and Holt-Reynolds (1994), Goodson and Hargraves (1996), and Brunetti (2001). Like life history research, the present study combined quantitative and qualitative methods to explore the attitudes and perspectives of experienced teachers.

### *Teacher Attrition and Burnout*

This study was informed by the research on teacher attrition among beginning teachers (Konanc, 1996; Marso & Pigge, 1997) as well as the phenomenon of burnout (Friedman, 1995) during teachers' later years in the profession. However, neither of these areas of research addressed teachers who remained satisfied with and enthusiastic about their jobs, committed to both their students and their profession.

### *Teacher Job Satisfaction*

This research also was informed by the study of Klecker & Loadman (1997) that identified some of the correlates of job satisfaction, including intrinsic rewards (e.g., professional autonomy, interactions with students and colleagues) and extrinsic rewards (e.g., salary, opportunities for advancement). Shann (1998) described teacher job satisfaction as a multifaceted construct that is critical to teacher retention, commitment and school effectiveness. Interviews and questionnaires from 92 teachers in four urban

middle schools were used to assess the importance and satisfaction that they assigned to various aspects of their jobs. Teacher-pupil relationships ranked highest overall whereas parent-teacher relationships were of greatest concern among the respondents.

Effective teachers place significant emphasis on student-teacher relationships (Gay, 1995; Laden-Billings, 1994). Yee (1990) reported that teachers' interactions with colleagues were their most valued professional stimulation. Other researchers have found that collegial support and interaction influence the satisfaction and retention of teachers (Popkewitz & Myrdal, 1991; Theobald, 1989).

Kim & Loadman (1994) reported seven statistically significant predictors of job satisfaction: interactions with students, interactions with colleagues, professional challenges, professional autonomy, working conditions, salary, and opportunities for advancement. Dinham (1994) divided sources of teacher satisfaction and dissatisfaction into affective and school structure/administration.

Teacher satisfaction influences education reform, job performance, attrition, and student performance. Yet studies of teacher satisfaction have shown wide-ranging differences according to demographics factors, experience and position. Even the measurement of satisfaction may be problematic with respect to teachers providing a unitary response to multifaceted complex issues.

## Research Questions

The purpose of the present study was to examine the following research questions:

1. To what extent are experienced elementary school teachers satisfied with their work.

2. Among those who are satisfied, what are the principal motivators or sources of satisfaction that underlie their decision to remain in the classroom?

## Methodology

*Setting and Participants*

This study was carried out in one large school district in northern California and two medium-size school districts in eastern Pennsylvania. The teachers taught in thirty-five different elementary schools in the three districts that served predominantly middle class populations with a social economic status range of economically depressed to affluent. The ethnic diversity of the student population ranged from homogeneous to heterogeneous. The districts' student population was 67.8 percent Caucasian, with significant numbers of Asian (10.7 percent), Hispanic (15.6) percent, and African-American (4.7 percent). The teachers ranged in age from under 40 to over 60 with the majority being in the 40-49 category. There were 7 men and 93 women. Since the teachers volunteered to participate, there was an element of self-selection bias in the study.

*Instrumentation*

The Experienced Teacher Survey (Appendix A) from Brunetti's study (2001) was used. This Survey was designed to collect demographics about the teachers and to provide information about teachers' satisfaction and their motivations for remaining in the classroom. The survey included 18 questions on motivations for remaining in the classroom in three broad areas: Professional Satisfaction Factors (Questions # 1-9), e.g. satisfaction in serving society, in seeing students learn and grow; Practical Factors (Questions # 10-15), job security, salary and benefits; and Social Factors (Questions # 16-18), relationships with parents, colleagues and administrators. The survey also included three questions designed to assess level of teacher satisfaction.

The survey identified factors, some intrinsic to teachers' work and others extrinsic, and asked teachers to indicate, using a 4-point scale, how important each factor has been in their decision to continue in their career as a classroom teacher. The scale ranged from 1.0 (not important) to 4.0 (very important). The survey also included a section in which teachers could write additional explanations or comments.

*Procedure*

Both quantitative and qualitative data were collected. After gaining the cooperation of school principals and administrators, the survey was disseminated to teachers who had 15 years or more teaching experience. They were asked to return the surveys directly to the researchers. Anonymity was assured. Among the teachers in Pennsylvania, 80 surveys were disseminated and 51 were returned, a return rate of 64%. In California, the school principals asked to give out the surveys so the actual number disseminated is unknown. A total of 49 surveys were returned.

## Results

The findings are grouped according to the three broad areas of motivating factors described above: Professional Satisfaction, Practical, and Social Factors. Mean scores for the teachers who returned their surveys (N=100) are displayed in Appendix A. Separate scores are included for each of the school districts in California and Pennsylvania and a composite score is also provided.

*Professional Satisfaction*

Questions concerning the level of professional satisfaction are displayed in Table 1. The questions were first analyzed for teachers in California and Pennsylvania separately and then for the teachers in aggregate.

Table 1

| | CA Survey N=49 Mean | PA Survey N=51 Mean | Total N=100 Mean |
|---|---|---|---|
| Survey Statements on Satisfaction | | | |
| I look forward to coming to work each day | 3.48 | 3.27 | 3.37 |
| If I had it to do over, I would choose the teaching profession again | 3.31 | 3.31 | 3.31 |
| I am satisfied with my job | 3.51 | 3.33 | 3.42 |

Among the 100 teachers surveyed, most were satisfied with their job in teaching (total mean score 3.42 on a 4-point scale ranging from 1.0 (strongly disagree) to 4.0 (strongly agree). However, according to the survey, teachers did express some concerns about the profession and choosing it again (total mean score 3.31). These concerns of teachers were also addressed in that section of the survey that asked for further explanations or comments. These concerns are described in a later section of this paper.

*Sources of Satisfaction*

*Professional Satisfaction Factors.* Teachers were satisfied with the profession for a variety of reasons. Some teachers felt a personal sense of satisfaction seeing children develop and learn. This was explained by one teacher who commented, "I like the opportunity to broaden the horizons of my students. I make my lessons relevant to the lives of my students and I expand lessons by connecting them to places, and events, in other parts of the country and the world. I help students realize that, although their local community is wonderful, there is a whole world out there to explore." Another teacher stated, "Teaching is a wonderful and rewarding career. There is nothing like seeing your students get an idea or understand a concept." A third teacher wrote, "My greatest satisfaction is working with youngsters and watching them develop and blossom through reading/language arts instruction from non-readers into readers, particularly those youngsters who are at risk because of learning difficulties or low socioeconomic backgrounds. Without the special help I give them, they might never learn to read."

Satisfaction also came from hearing about the accomplishments of former students as a result of teachers staying in touch with them or their families throughout the years. "I enjoy teaching and watching the students grow both academically and socially. Then, in years down the road, when a parents comes up to you and tells you that their child who had you in class is now in college or has a good job, it makes you feel good and that all your effort was worth it. Also, sometimes the students come back to visit and fill you in on their lives," commented one experienced teacher. Another teacher stated, "Teaching has given me much self-satisfaction. I have learned so much from my

students about life in general. I have also kept in touch with former students throughout the years, and it's exciting to hear how successful they are as adults and know that I may have had a small influence in their lives and education."

Teachers also indicated that teaching had enhanced their own lives. One teacher explained, "I have the most inspirational job in the world. I touch the future. I love being in the classroom because my life has been so enhanced by my teaching profession. I have expected nothing less than excellence in the classroom from myself as well as my students, and this is the key to success for the classroom." Another experienced teacher revealed, "I have an absolute passion for teaching. No other profession could have been as fulfilling or personally rewarding as teaching has been for me." Finally, one teacher stated, "Finding your spirit in a career that one feels is most fulfilling was worth the journey it took to get here."

Another motivator was the passion teachers had for their subject matter. Unlike middle and high school teachers, elementary teachers usually are responsible for teaching a wide range of content areas such as reading, writing, math, science and social studies. They find joy in teaching a variety of subjects as exemplified in the survey for which the total mean score for this question was 3.31. According to the survey, teachers also gained much satisfaction from the intellectual challenges involved in teaching (total mean score 3.40).

Teacher preparation programs as well as in-service opportunities were other motivators that inspired some teachers to stay in the classroom. One teacher explained, "I think my college had a wonderful teacher preparation program. I was lucky to be involved with a group of professors who encouraged creativity and experience." Another teacher stated that the school districts she worked in throughout her career, "...did an excellent job of providing on-going, relevant in-service training over the years."

*Social Satisfaction Factors.* In addition to students being a major factor in teachers' satisfaction, there were other motivators that kept them in the classroom for fifteen or more years. One example was the excitement of being in the classroom. One teacher stated, "No two days have ever been the same", and another teacher added, "...though your curriculum may be the same for a few years at a time, each day is always new and different as you are always dealing with different students." Some teachers enjoy the creative challenge and the ability to create a sense of community. "I cherish the sense of community in my classroom. I honor each student where they are and help them to feel successful as they continue to become more successful," reported one teacher, and another one said, "Creating a community in the classroom definitely helps those students who may have felt disenfranchised."

Other motivators for remaining in the classroom were freedom and flexibility. This was best captured through the following comments: "An important factor in my job satisfaction has been the freedom and flexibility to set up my program without interference from administrators. As long as I can produce the desired results, I am allowed to select materials, teaching methods and program structure to meet the needs of all the youngsters I see. Without staff, parent and administrative confidence in my judgment, I would not be able to function in my present capacity and would leave teaching for another profession." This feeling was explained by another teacher who stated, "Having an effective principal with ideas and enthusiasm would certainly add to

the positive climate, but having freedom is probably the most important factor." In the survey, the mean score was 3.51 for how much this factor contributed to teacher satisfaction.

Teachers appeared to be satisfied with their work when administrators and parents were supportive and yet still allowed teachers the freedom and flexibility to make decisions regarding best practice for their students. In the survey, the total mean score for teachers feeling satisfaction due to an effective principal was 3.32, and 3.39 for supportive parents and community. One teacher explained that one reason for her decision to remain in the classroom was, "I have always worked with elementary students from good families who are interested in education." Another teacher commented that, "There has been a big change in the last ten years. Families are busier and parents approach and discipline their children in a more liberal way. Some of this is good. I think the fathers' participation and interest, especially in attending conferences, is wonderful."

Another factor that influenced teachers' decisions to remain in the classroom was collegiality. According to the survey, a total mean score of 3.38 indicated that teachers felt that the enjoyment of teacher colleagues (meaning that they are interesting, supportive, and committed to teaching) was a very important element in their continuing as a classroom teacher.

*Practical Satisfaction Factors.* Finally, there were some practical motivators that kept people in the profession for fifteen or more years. One teacher explained, "The most important factor that contributed to my continued employment as a teacher was that I am raising my own children and I have the same schedule as they do." Another teacher revealed, "As a working parent there are certainly many benefits to teaching i.e., similar hours as my own children's as well as similar holidays." A third teacher confides " I taught for four years and then stayed home for nine years with our three sons. I went back to teaching because it fit into the schedule of raising children with holidays and summers off. I found that the longer I was back, the more I really enjoyed it. After having children of my own, I had more of an understanding of where the children and their parents were coming from."

According to the survey, the mean scores for these factors above were as follows: Advantages of a teaching schedule for someone raising a family (2.96), the holidays: summer vacation, winter and spring breaks, etc. (3.04), job security – tenure (3.16), and salary and benefits (3.17).

In summary, there were many factors that motivated teachers to remain in the classroom. The factors included the joy of working with students, passion for teaching a variety of subjects, the excitement of the classroom, the freedom and flexibility, the support of administrators, parents, and colleagues, and teacher preparation programs and in-service opportunities. Finally, there were practical motivators such as holidays, job security, salary, and teaching schedules that influenced teachers' decisions to remain in the profession.

*Concerns About Being in the Profession*

As described above, out of 100 teachers surveyed, most were satisfied with their job in teaching (total mean score 3.74) due to a variety of factors. However, teachers did express some concerns about the profession and choosing it again (total mean score 3.31). In addition, the explanations and comments teachers wrote also addressed this issue. These concerns of teachers are described in the following section.

One major area of concern teachers had about being in the profession was the increased demands and stresses they feel. For example, many teachers commented on the excessive amount of paperwork and the pressures of high stakes testing. One teacher stated, "I'm so disillusioned with the teaching profession now that I'm thinking of early retirement. There is so much paperwork and accountability and repetition of doing things over." Another teacher echoed the concerns saying, "Since starting my career twenty six years ago, the amount of paperwork has definitely increased. Though important, individual student assessments demand an extremely huge amount of my time. Report cards, reports, parent communication etc. have become quite lengthy and sometimes tedious. The number of before and after school mandatory meetings has also increased." A third teacher reported, "Today's paperwork unrelated to teaching is becoming a deterrent to teachers' enjoyment." A fourth teacher commented, "My first 10 years were very productive for the students I taught academically. At this point, I'm finding that the need for constant assessing, parental meetings as well as I.E.P. writings has diminished my teaching time as well as my effectiveness. Finally, a fifth teacher responded, "I have concerns about the increased demands on teachers' time both within and outside the classroom. More and more curriculum has been added with many more assessment expectations, which take time away from teaching. In addition, I am very concerned about the increased pressure with the standards, which are often not developmentally appropriate. I don't have a problem with standards testing, but I feel we're not being realistic or developmentally appropriate in many cases."

This concern about tests continued to be a theme in teachers' remarks. For example, one teacher said, "I am presently concerned with the status of education, and particularly the teaching of reading. I am alarmed because I do not want to sacrifice children's love of learning for test scores. I see some signs that our politicians are more concerned with children as 'test takers' than 'lifetime learners.' I am reminded of my experience in junior high where I was required to memorize useless facts and figures to pass a science test. I absolutely hated the class because there was no transfer of learning to reality or life and I knew I would never remember the useless drilled information past the true/false and multiple choice test questions. It was an exercise in futility because no meaning was attached." Still another teacher explained, "I am not sure how much longer I can put up with the grief aspects of teaching. Ten years ago, I just shut the classroom door and got on with the business of teaching – what I knew in my gut was good for kids! In the last year, I feel that my worth as a teacher has been reduced to a number...a test score...of how my students performed on a test. The number is what measures whether I was a good teacher. Did it measure whether I taught kids how to think, how to be a good citizen? Of course not. I feel I am now asked to be a Miracle Worker---take children whom I have never met before, and somehow change the way they have lived for 8 years, make their lives different, make what is important—different, and have their families change too?? In 9 months? This is now expected of me as a teacher; I have to turn it all

around, and it is measured through a test score. Something is very wrong with this picture. . " Finally, one teacher commented, "My philosophy of teaching is that every child can learn, regardless of background and ability, and my job is to find out how to connect to that child, then expect the best as I work with this youngster in as many ways as I need to facilitate his learning to read. If the trend continues towards 'teaching to the test mandated by the state' and 'canned' reading programs are required, then my joy of teaching will be extinguished and I will leave the profession because teaching will no longer be dynamic and I will no longer be challenged to teach in the best way to meet each child's needs for lifetime learning."

In conjunction with increased pressures of accountability and paperwork, teachers also reported that more time needs to be provided to support the extra demands as well as curriculum changes. One teacher stated, "I love teaching, but the job is extra demanding with not enough support and 'prep' time provided." Another teacher expressed concern about the amount of personal time it takes to teach by responding, "Sometimes I think I would choose a job that didn't take so many evenings and weekends. I get too tired sometimes." A third teacher wrote, "Teaching is exciting because there are always new ideas and materials to incorporate into your curriculum. However, there just never seems to be enough time to digest the new material and develop solid lessons around it. It would be great to be given a day or even half of a day every couple of months to be in the classroom without students, to develop curriculum." Finally, a fourth teacher commented, "New curriculum is coming down too quickly without adequate time to focus on implementation of the materials. Often it is up to the teachers to supplement programs with appropriate materials."

Another frustration that teachers reported was the inadequate preparation and support for inclusion of special needs students in their classroom. A teacher explained, "I think that teaching has changed drastically in the last few years. All of the accountability issues have put lots of pressure and extra demands on teachers. In addition, meeting all of the requirements put in place and taking care of various special needs students without any support and/or time to meet these needs has put even more stress on teachers. Many of my colleagues and I don't feel valued for the job we do." A second teacher wrote, "Teaching today is becoming more stressful and complex because of the variety of students (autistic, PDD, Down's Syndrome) in the regular class due to inclusion and the lack of acknowledgement and support that these learners require different expertise and time. Teachers feel a lack of control over the classroom due to their unpredictability." A third teacher added, "With inclusion and lack of funding, it seems that teaching is becoming more and more difficult. The range of abilities and problems has widened, yet there is no additional training for this. Each classroom has become a 'special education' classroom."

Not only did teachers describe concerns about being in the profession due to lack of support for the inclusion of special needs students but they expressed their frustration at the lack of support and appreciation from parents, administrators, the government and public. This was explained by one teacher who commented, " My reasons for going into teaching have not changed in 25 years. The frustrations and stress have increased dramatically over the past 10 years. Most of the stresses come from the top down . . . unrealistic expectations and poor decisions made by the state . . . more criticism by media and lack of support and appreciation from parents. When I shut the door and work with

my kids, things are good." A second teacher wrote, "It was a lot nicer teaching when I first started. The children had fewer problems and the parents and public were more supportive of teachers. If I had to do it over again, I would have chosen a different field such as law." A third teacher stated, "Many things in education have changed over the years. It is not as much fun as it used to be. Teachers are being expected to do things that were once 'home responsibilities.' I think education needs to get its focus. It seems scattered and goes in many directions – some educational trends – some society trends." A fourth teacher continued this thought of changes in society and added, "As society changes, teacher need to adapt. If only the politicians would recognize the job we do instead of constantly putting education down. Maybe then we'd have more respect from the parents and the children." Another teacher commented, "I do believe lack of a supportive family does have an effect on motivation and only sometimes can the school be the substitute." One more teacher echoed the concerns and stated, "The huge challenge to teaching is the problem of inadequate parenting and priorities, or the lack thereof. Every day of every school year I have taught, I have seen the effects of parents who don't take their job as parents seriously." Finally, one teacher explained, "Lack of administrative leadership sets the tone for out of control schools and students. A principal's incompetence can allow this to happen. We have acquired an elementary curriculum supervisor – a fellow who runs around flapping his hands. His goal is to put the district on a five-year track to put into place an academic program. We'll have to see if the school board will allow him to do the job with proper support through funding and support personnel."

In addition to this lack of support and appreciation, teachers were concerned about class size as well as low monetary compensation. One teacher stated, "The class size for all elementary schools needs to be down to 20 to 1 and middle school and high schools should be 25 to 1. There should be extra funds for low-income areas to help bring up the standards (computers, etc.) that students miss out on at home. Also, I wish that the government would fund education like the military and that a teacher could get the same benefits and retirement. Coming from another state, I lost 10 years of retirement (more or less) because I was not in the CA retirement system." A second teacher responded, "I have loved my students for 39 years and love my job. I've attended workshops and have learned new ideas and methods for reaching every child. I have 90 units of professional growth beyond my B.A. degree. I don't feel the 'districts' ever have appreciated the dedication that teachers give to their profession. Salaries are a joke. If you are a single parent and breadwinner, there is no way you can support your family." Another teacher added to this concern by explaining, "I personally advise my own children against a career in education. The work is never-ending and the monetary compensation is low." Finally, a teacher expressed her frustration and stated, "The economics of being a teacher are disastrous, particularly in areas where the cost of living is so high. I have only been able to continue because of my 'Mr. Corporate America' husband and his salary. If not for his high salary, we couldn't afford the nice house we live in, or the comfortable lifestyle we lead. How would we afford to save for the two college educations for our children? A teacher's salary, or even two teaching salaries would make living in these places a tremendous struggle. The teaching profession will suffer because of this. Not many people, particularly men, who are needed, will go into teaching because their lives with their families will be ones of struggle...why go into

teaching, even if you think you might make a difference with children, if your own life will be a difficult one? Teaching should be no more altruistic than any other profession."

In summary, this section identifies the concerns teachers have about being in the profession. The concerns stem from increased demands and stresses due to the amount of paperwork and the pressures of high stakes testing. Teachers also are frustrated about the inadequate preparation and support for inclusion of special needs students in their classroom as well as the lack of support and appreciation from parents, administrators, government, and the public in general. Low monetary compensation, not enough time and large class size are other concerns teachers expressed about the profession.

**Conclusions and Recommendations for Change**

This examination of teacher satisfaction in a group of elementary teachers in both northern California and eastern Pennsylvania and found that there were many reasons teachers were satisfied with their careers. However, there were also concerns expressed about being in the profession. This section discusses recommendations for change in the profession based upon the voices of experienced teachers who have been in the classroom for fifteen or more years. The ultimate goal is to learn from these teachers in order to enhance the pre-service education of beginning teachers as well as the in-service education of other teachers.

Based on the views expressed by experienced teachers, some recommendations follow:

1. Reduce class size to 20 students across the elementary grades and 25 students at the secondary level.
2. Continue to hold students and teachers accountable, but use multiple assessment measures combining more authentic assessment with standardized testing.
3. Reduce unnecessary demands on teachers, e.g. the amount of paperwork required.
4. Provide more training and support for teachers who have students with special needs.
5. Increase teachers' salaries.
6. Provide more preparation time for teachers.
7. When curriculum changes occur, provide learning and supplementary materials so teachers don't need to create their own.
8. Develop a system where teachers can maintain their retirement if they change states or districts.
9. Invite the media in to see innovative and successful students, teachers, and programs. Educate the media about the positives that are happening in our schools.
10. Initiate or implement effective parent education programs in the schools.

If we want to make education better for future students and teachers, we must continue to examine the lives of experienced teachers from their own perspectives and in the context of their own experiences and values. This study does just that. By listening to the voices of experienced teachers – what motivates them to stay in the profession as well as their concerns – we, as teacher educators, can more realistically prepare new teachers. In addition, the education system as a whole can benefit from the teachers' recommendations for improvement to help move the profession to the next level of excellence.

*Future Research and Questions*

This research has important implications and conclusions for the teaching profession. However, further research is needed to examine the following areas: How important is it for teachers to reflect upon their career and does it affect their decisions to be a teacher and to remain in the classroom? What are the principal things teachers try to accomplish? To what extent do teachers regard teaching as a true profession rather than a vocation? How can the concerns and recommendations that were provided by the teachers be addressed? What advice would experienced teachers offer beginning teachers entering the classroom today?

*Author's note*

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**Appendix A**
**Experienced Teacher Survey (includes results)**

Gender: _____ (M or F)
Age: _____under 40 _____40-49 _____50-59 _____over 60
Ethnic group (optional) _____
What subject(s) do you teach? _____
What grade(s) do you teach? _____
How many years have you been at your present school? _____
Have you taught in other schools? _____Yes _____No
If yes, where:

| City | State | Grade Level | Number of Years |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |

How many years total have you been teaching? _____
Do you hope to still be teaching in 5 years? _____Yes _____No _____Do not know
If no, why not? _____
When you stop working, what do you plan to do? _____
Do you plan to continue working with children or young people in some capacity?
_____Yes _____No _____Do not know
If yes, please describe _____

To what extent has your decision to continue working as a classroom teacher been influenced by the following factors, some intrinsic to your work, others extrinsic? Please circle the number that indicates how important each factor is to you.

| | Not Important 1 | Of Little Importance 2 | Somewhat Important 3 | Very Important 4 | Returned CA Survey (N=49) Mean | Returned PA Survey (N=51) Mean | Total Combined Survey (N=100) Mean |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Satisfaction in fulfilling a professional commitment. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 3.61 | 3.67 | 3.64 |
| 2. Satisfaction in serving society (e.g., 'making a difference' by educating future citizens). | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 3.57 | 3.65 | 3.61 |

| | Not Important 1 | Of Little Importance 2 | Somewhat Important 3 | Very Important 4 | Returned CA Survey (N=49) Mean | Returned PA Survey (N=51) Mean | Total Combined Survey (N=100) Mean |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 3. Satisfaction with working with young people (including involvement in extracurricular activities). | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 3.78 | 3.78 | 3.78 |
| 4. Satisfaction in being successful at something you enjoy. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 4.0 | 3.73 | 3.78 |
| 5. Satisfaction in seeing young people learn and grow. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 3.86 | 3.80 | 3.83 |
| 6. Joy in teaching a variety of subjects | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 3.53 | 3.08 | 3.31 |
| 7. The intellectual challenges involved in teaching | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 3.47 | 3.33 | 3.40 |
| 8. Freedom and flexibility in the classroom | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 3.58 | 3.43 | 3.51 |
| 9. The opportunity to be creative (e.g., in designing curriculum and lessons) | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 3.63 | 3.63 | 3.63 |
| 10. No where else to go (after many years of teaching). | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 1.79 | 1.86 | 1.83 |
| 11. The holidays: summer vacation, winter and spring breaks, etc. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 2.94 | 3.14 | 3.04 |

| | Not Important 1 | Of Little Importance 2 | Somewhat Important 3 | Very Important 4 | Returned CA Survey (N=49) Mean | Returned PA Survey (N=51) Mean | Total Combined Survey (N=100) Mean |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 12. Job security (tenure). | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 2.89 | 3.41 | 3.16 |
| 13. Salary and benefits. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 2.96 | 3.37 | 3.17 |
| 14. Enjoyment of school as an institution. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 3.26 | 2.94 | 3.10 |
| 15. Advantages of teaching schedule for someone raising a family. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 2.81 | 3.10 | 2.96 |
| 16. Enjoyment of teacher colleagues (e.g., interesting, supportive, committed to teaching). | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 3.43 | 3.33 | 3.38 |
| 17. An effective principal (e.g., able, open, supportive, good manager). | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 3.47 | 3.18 | 3.32 |
| 18. Supportive parents, community. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 3.51 | 3.27 | 3.39 |
| 19. Overall satisfaction with career. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 3.77 | 3.73 | 3.74 |

For each statement below, please circle the number that indicates whether you agree or disagree with the accompanying statement.

(1) Strongly Disagree; (2) Disagree; (3) Agree; (4) Strongly Agree

| | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. I look forward to coming to work each day. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 3.48 | 3.27 | 3.37 |

(1) Strongly Disagree; (2) Disagree; (3) Agree; (4) Strongly Agree

| | | | | Returned CA Survey (N=49) Mean | Returned PA Survey (N=51) Mean | Total Combined Survey (N=100) Mean |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 2. If I had to choose my career over again, I would still select the teaching profession. | | | | | | |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 3.31 | 3.31 | 3.31 |
| 3. I am satisfied with my job. | | | | | | |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 3.51 | 3.33 | 3.42 |
| 4. Students' motivation and performance depend on their home environment; a teacher cannot do much to overcome this | | | | | | |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 2.21 | 2.27 | 2.24 |
| 5. With hard work, I can get through to even the most difficult students. | | | | | | |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 3.11 | 2.82 | 2.96 |

If you have further explanations or comments, please write them below or on a separate sheet of paper.

I would like to conduct individual interviews with some of you to explore further your experiences in teaching and your motivations for remaining in elementary education. I anticipate that each interview, scheduled at your convenience, will run approximately 1 to 1 ½ hours. Would you be willing to be interviewed?

_____Yes _____No _____Possibly, please call me.

If you answer "Yes" or "Possibly," please include your name and telephone number so that I can call you.

Name: _____
Telephone Number: _____

Thank you for your time and willingness to complete this survey. Please return it in the enclosed, stamped, envelope by _____.

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